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ACTION DRL-09

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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0070

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 001612

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: OTRA, PHUM, PREL, RW, US
SUBJECT: VISIT OF DAS BUSHNELL DELEGATION TO SOUTHEAST

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. DURING HER TWO DAY VISIT, DAS BUSHNELL PRESSED GOR AND UN OFFICIALS ABOUT REPORTS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES STILL FLEEING SOUTHEASTERN RWANDA. SHE VISITED SOUTHEAST PREFECTURES OF BUGASERA AND KIBUNGO AND SPOKE WITH GOR AND NOG REPRESENTATIVES IN THE REGION. INTERLOCUTORS OFFERED A VARIETY OF EXPLANATIONS FOR THE REPORTS, INCLUDING BOTH RPA AND INTERHAMWE INTIMIDATION. WHATEVER THE REASON, REGION REMAINS SPARSELY POPULATED WITH LITTLE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY; MANY RESIDENTS APPEAR TO BE NEWCOMERS AND MANY RP

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SOLDIERS NEW RECRUITS. END SUMMARY.

3. REPORTS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF NEW REFUGEES LEAVING RWANDA CONTINUE. UNHCR HAS REPORTED AN AVERAGE OF 1,500 NEW REGISTRATIONS PER DAY AT BENACO CAMP IN TANZANIA OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. STORIES ARE ALSO CIRCULATING OF PEOPLE BEING INTIMIDATED OR KILLED BY SOLDIERS IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION. IN HER SEPTEMBER 15-18 VISIT TO RWANDA, DAS BUSHNELL QUERIED GOR AND UN OFFICIALS ON THESE REPORTS.

4. EXPLANATIONS WERE VARIED. GOR OFFICIALS SUGGESTED

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REVIEW AUTHORITY:
HARRY R. MELONE

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INCREASED REFUGEE NUMBERS WERE DUE TO INTERHAMWE INFILTRATION INTO THE SOUTHEAST OR TO REFUGEES AND/OR RWANDAN MILITARY FROM EASTERN ZAIRE MAKING THEIR WAY TO TANZANIA, A CLAIMS SOMEWHAT SUPPORTED BY RELIABLE REPORTS OF UNIFORMED EX-FAR FROM GOMA IN BENACO. (A LIBREVILLE RADIO STATION ALSO REPORTED THAT DOZENS OF EX-FAR FORCES HAD SECRETLY LEFT ZAIRE TO FORM A NEW ARMY IN TANZANIA). ONE OFFICIAL ALSO SUGGESTED RESIDENTS HAD BEEN FRIGHTENED BY CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN RPA AND INTERHAMWE MILITIA IN THAT AREA.

5. UNHCR OFFICIAL THOUGHT THE NEW ARRIVALS MIGHT BE PEOPLE WHO HAD FLED TO SWAMPY AREAS NEAR THEIR HOMES AFTER THE RPA TOOK OVER; WITH RUMORS OF REPRISALS BY RPA TROOPS AND OF RWANDAN AND BURUNDIAN TUTSIS TAKING OVER PROPERTY IN THE AREA, THESE PEOPLE HAD FINALLY DECIDED IT WAS NOT SAFE TO RETURN AND HAD HEADED FOR THE BORDER. THE UNAMIR FORCE COMMANDER BELIEVED THE RPA REMAINED DISCIPLINED OVERALL, BUT ADMITTED HE HAD NO TROOPS ON THE GROUND IN THE SOUTHEAST AS YET TO MONITOR THE SITUATION .

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6. ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR, DA8 BUSHNELL AND PARTY LATER VISITED KIBUNGO AND BUGASERA PREFECTURES IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION. PARTY STOPPED AT RETURNEE CENTER IN RILIMA AND VISITED CHURCHES IN NYAMATA AND NTARAMA, SITES OF EARLIER MASSACRES OF TUTSI RESIDENTS (ALLEGEDLY BY INTERHAMWE MILITIA). IN KIBUNGO, PARTY SPOKE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNAIONAL MEDICAL CORPS (IMC).

7. AT DISPLACED CENTER IN RILIMA, ONLY 150 REMAINED OF THE 13,000 DISPLACED SHELTERING THERE IN MID-JULY. GOR OFFICIAL (AND RPA MEMBER) AT THE CENTER SAID NEARLY ALL HAD RETURNED TO THEIR HOME AREAS IN THE SOUTHWEST FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL RPA RETURN TO THAT ZONE. MOST RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTHEAST WHO HAD FLED EARLIER HAD ALSO RETURNED AND WERE FARMING THEIR LANDS, HE CLAIMED. ON THE NEW REFUGEE OUTFLOWS, OFFICIAL ECHOED OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN SUGGESTING IT WAS PROBABLY MILITIA CROSSING FROM THE ZAIRIAN CAMPS TO TANZANIA.

8. REPRESENTATIVES OF IRC (ONLY INTERNAIONAL NGO OPERATING IN THIS SECTOR) STRESSED THAT, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH REPORTS, THEY HAD SEEN NO INCIDENTS OF INTIMIDATION OR KILLINGS THEMSELVES. HOSPITAL COORDINATOR REPORTED THAT NO

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FIREARM OR MACHETE INJURIES HAD SHOWN UP AT THE KIBUNGO HOSPITAL IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS. HOWEVER, BASED ON THE SYSTEMATIC NATURE OF THE EXODUS, THEY SPECULATED THAT "ORDERED DEPARTURE" OF REMAINING RESIDENTS WAS BEING ORCHESTRATED FROM THE CAMPS BY CIVILIAN OR MILITIA LEADERS. WHOLE VILLAGES APPEARED TO BE PULLING UP STAKES TOGETHER,

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GRADUALLY MOVING DOWN FROM THE NORTHWEST TO THE SOUTHEAST (EMBASSY DATT AGREES WITH THIS ASSESSMENT).

9. IN THE DAY-LONG DRIVE THROUGH THE REGION, PARTY NOTED THAT COUNTRYSIDE REMAINED RELATIVELY SPARSELY POPULATED. CROPS (COFFEE AND SORGHUM) WERE ROTTING IN THE FIELDS AND LAND HAD NOT BEEN PREPARED FOR NEW PLANTING. VEHICLES WITH BURUNDI LICENSE PLATES (INCLUDING A NUMBER OF GREEN AND WHITE BURUNDI INTERCITY BUSES) WERE PLENTIFUL. BOTH THE RPA REP AT RILIMA AND A DOCTOR AT THE NEARBY CLINIC, AS WELL AS SEVERAL RESIDENTS PARTY SPOKE WITH ALONG THE WAY, WERE LONG-TIME RWANDAN REFUGEES IN BURUNDI WHO HAD RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE SOUTHEAST. RPA TROOPS STATIONED AT CHECKPOINTS APPEARED YOUNGER, LESS EXPERIENCED AND MORE RAGTAG THAN THOSE ENCOUNTERED IN TRAVEL TO OTHER REGIONS, PARTICULARLY THE NORTHWEST.

10. COMMENT. PARTY SAW NOTHING SPECIFIC WHICH WOULD CORROBORATE ANY OF THE EXPLANATIONS OFFERED. HOWEVER, COMBINATION OF NEW DEPARTURES TO TANZANIA, NEW ARRIVALS FROM

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BURUNDI AND WHAT APPEARED TO BE NEW RECRUITS FROM THE RPA,
SUGGESTS THAT SOMETHING IS HAPPENING IN THE AREA TO KEEP
LIFE FROM RETURNING TO NORMAL AND PEOPLE FROM RETURNING
HOME. THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF UNAMIR AND HUMAN RIGHTS
MONITORS IN THIS SECTOR -- WHICH COULD IN TURN ENCOURAGE TH
PRESENCE OF NGOS -- IS ESSENTIAL TO BOTH MONITORING AND
STABILIZING THE REGION.

11. DAS BUSHNELL DID NOT SEE THIS MESSAGE BEFORE DEPARTING
POST. RAWSON

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